

Fatigue

What is fatigue?

- lack of energy
- tiredness
- exhaustion
- difficult to concentrate
- changes day by day
- frustrating

Fatigue affects people differently and there can be many causes. Evidence shows between 70-80% of people with cancer/long term conditions report fatigue. Fatigue can be physical and/or emotional.

Possible causes of fatigue

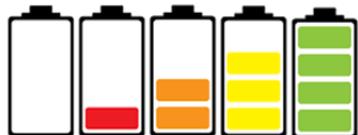
The disease itself, treatments/medications, pain, psychological factors (stress/ anxiety), anaemia, poor nutrition, poor sleep, physical deconditioning.

Remember: Use your energy wisely!

Imagine your energy as a 'pot of coins'. Some activities with top up your 'coins' and other activities will use up the energy in your pot. Try to keep 20% of energy in reserve.



You could think of your energy like a battery. You can 'recharge your battery' and 'drain your battery'. A battery cannot function if it is flat, and your body cannot function when it has no energy.



Fatigue Management Strategies: The 4 P's

Activity modification involves changing behaviour and habits established over many years which can be challenging. It is important to recognise your boundaries and gradually implement changes to your routine.

1) Prioritise

- what do you need or want to do? What are your goals?
- prioritise jobs in order of importance, try writing lists
- dump it, delay it, delegate it, do it [MS Trust, 2012]

2) Plan

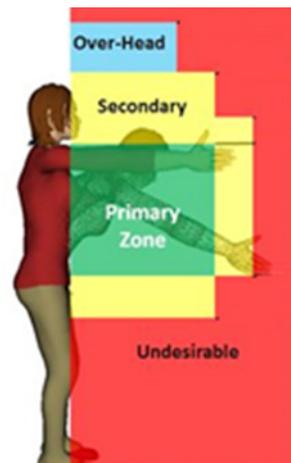
- consider your best time of day - when do you have the most energy?
- alternate light and heavy tasks, include time to rest
- preparation for task
- consider energy depleting tasks and energy replenishing tasks

3) Pacing

- remember the story of the hare and the tortoise
- break down the task into manageable pieces
- aim to keep a balance, and avoid over-activity and prolonged periods of rest

4) Positioning

- sitting uses 25% less energy than standing
- how is your environment set up? Chair heights? Distances? Items in easy reach? Clear walkways?
- good posture



Things to try:

- do whatever chores you can sitting down – perching stool
- use long handled aids – shoe horn, sponge, helping hand
- modify location of items – keep things frequently used nearby, keep items on kitchen worktop
- keep the phone close to your preferred chair
- consider using a light weight kettle or iron
- use a towelling bath robe to dry off initially
- consider online shopping
- make meals in bulk and freeze portions, or use ready meals sometimes
- use trolleys/caddies to carry items room to room
- ensure furniture is the correct height (aim to have hips higher than your knees)
- have rest points throughout the house (helps breathlessness as well)
- plan your tasks in a diary/calendar to help you pace and prioritise.

Sleep

Good quality sleep can aid fatigue management. Here are some suggestions to promote quality sleep:

- keep to a pre-sleep routine
- try to nap early afternoon for 30-45 mins only
- try to keep a regular sleep - wake pattern
- try relaxation techniques
- avoid caffeinated drinks before sleep
- maintain activity during the day
- write your worries on a list
- sleeping conditions e.g. temperature, noise, comfort

By using a diary, you can learn important information about your fatigue patterns and triggers. You can then use this information to help you plan and pace your activities to your best abilities.

Fatigue diary

Using the numbers below, record your fatigue/energy level number each day:

1 = No fatigue

2 = Mild fatigue (but able to do normal activities)

3 = Moderate fatigue (able to do some activities, but need rest)

4 = Severe fatigue (difficulty walking, or doing home activities such as cooking/shopping)

5 = Extreme fatigue (need to sleep/rest all day).

It may help to note down what tasks you have been doing alongside your fatigue/energy level number as this can show you how different things can impact on your energy levels.

For example:

Fatigue/Energy level	
	Monday
Morning	3 - shower and dress

Fatigue/Energy level							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Review your diary at the end of the week and consider the 4 P's (Prioritising, Planning, Pacing and Positioning) to modify your activity routines to use your energy most efficiently.

If you would like further information, please contact the hospice occupational therapist on **01473 707925**.